



Uptown *neighborhood*

Design Guidelines

Proposed December 2008



City of Seattle
Department of Planning
and Development



Seattle Design Review Program

The table summarizes whether Uptown-specific guidance is given, and if targeted Character Area direction is provided.

Citywide Design Guideline	Uptown Supplemental Guidance	Targeted Character Area Direction
A. Site Planning		
A-1 Respond to Site Characteristics.....	Yes	Uptown Park; Uptown Urban; Heart of Uptown
A-2 Streetscape Compatibility	Yes	Uptown Park; Uptown Urban; Heart of Uptown
A-3 Entrances Visible From the Street	Yes	
A-4 Human Activity	Yes	Uptown Park; Uptown Urban; Heart of Uptown
A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites.....	-	
A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street.....	Yes	Uptown Park
A-7 Residential Open Space	Yes	-
A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access.....	Yes	-
A-9 Location of Parking on Commercial Street Fronts.....	-	-
A-10 Corner Lots	Yes	-
B. Height, Bulk and Scale		
B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility	Yes	Uptown Urban; Heart of Uptown
C. Architectural Elements and Materials		
C-1 Architectural Context.....	Yes	Uptown Park; Uptown Urban; Heart of Uptown
C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency	Yes	-
C-3 Human Scale	Yes	-
C-4 Exterior Finish Materials	Yes	Uptown Park; Uptown Urban; Heart of Uptown
C-5 Structured Parking Entrances.....	-	-
D. Pedestrian Environment		
D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances.....	Yes	Uptown Urban
D-2 Blank Walls	Yes	Uptown Park; Uptown Urban; Heart of Uptown
D-3 Retaining Walls	Yes	Uptown Park
D-4 Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks.....	Yes	Uptown Urban; Heart of Uptown
D-5 Visual Impact of Parking Structures.....	Yes	Uptown Urban; Heart of Uptown
D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities, and Service Areas	-	-
D-7 Personal Safety, and Security	-	-
D-8 Treatment of Alleys	Yes	Uptown Urban; Heart of Uptown
D-9 Commercial Signage	Yes	-
D-10 Commercial Lighting	Yes	Uptown Urban; Heart of Uptown
E. Landscaping		
E-1 Landscaping to Enhance Continuity with Adjacent Sites	Yes	Uptown Park
E-2 Landscaping to Enhance Building and/or Site	Yes	Uptown Park
E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions	-	-

A. Site Planning

A-1 Responding To Site Characteristics

The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views of other natural features.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

Throughout Uptown new developments should, to the extent possible, be sited to further contribute to the neighborhood's pedestrian character.

In the **Uptown Urban** and **Heart of Uptown** character areas encourage outdoor dining areas utilizing sidewalks and areas adjacent to sidewalks. Outdoor dining is especially encouraged for sites on block faces with southern exposure.



Outdoor dining is encouraged on south-facing blocks to take advantage of sun exposure.

A-2 Streetscape Compatibility

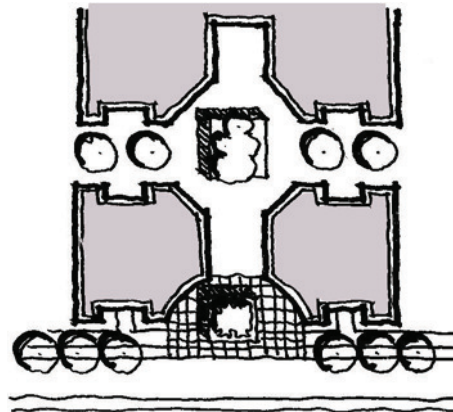
The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

Throughout Uptown developments that respond outward to the public realm are preferred.

- Site outdoor spaces in accordance with the location and scale of adjacent streets, buildings, and uses. For example, an on-site plaza should not unduly interrupt the retail continuity of a street.
- Locate plazas intended for public use at or near grade to promote both a physical and visual connection to the street. Special paving materials, landscaping, and other elements can be used to provide a clear definition between the public and private realms.
- Define outdoor spaces through a combination of building and landscaping, and discourage over-sized spaces that lack containment.

Throughout Uptown site identity features such as art, signage or major public open space at gateway locations as identified on the map. Seek opportunities for welcoming signage that is specific to the Uptown Urban Center at gateway locations. Architecture should also reinforce gateway locations.



An example of a courtyard with access from an adjacent street that is visually permeable from the sidewalk, allowing passersby to see into the space.



Public art and focal points such as towers and fountains may be appropriate for plazas in certain locations.

Within the **Uptown Park** character area, streetscape improvements should include where feasible a consistent park-like landscaped strip in the planting strip, as consistent with the historic pattern in the area. New developments may elect to take inspiration from the *Uptown Park District Landscaped Streets Element* as endorsed by the Uptown Alliance, for the format of the streetscape. However, adherence to the landscaped streets element is voluntary.

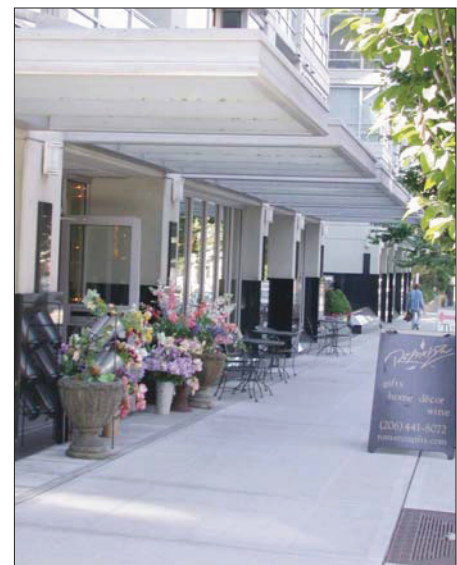
In the **Uptown Urban** and **Heart of Uptown** character areas, encourage streetscapes that respond to unique conditions created by Seattle Center. Encourage wide sidewalks to accommodate high pedestrian volumes during event times, and create safe, well-marked crossings at entrances to the Center. Streetscape furniture and landscaping should be cited and designed to accommodate the flow of event crowds. Buildings on and adjacent to the Seattle Center campus should be cited to create relationships and connections between the Center and surrounding Uptown neighborhoods.

In the **Heart of Uptown** character area new development should provide when possible: a widened sidewalk through additional building setback at street level; or retail façade design with panels, sliding doors or other features that allow generous openings to the street.

In the **Uptown Park** character area, when retail and offices are located within the neighborhood, they should be designed to acknowledge and blend with the predominantly residential environment. Storefronts, office entries and signs should be understated and muted, while still presenting a street presence. Bright or loud colors and lights should be avoided in this park-like residential character area.



Streetscapes should respond to unique conditions presented by Seattle Center such as the McCaw Hall plaza.



Facades in the Heart of Uptown should provide additional setbacks and have generous openings to the street.

A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street

Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

Throughout Uptown, major entrances to developments should be prominent. The use of distinctive designs with historical references is strongly encouraged. Design, detailing, materials and landscaping may all be employed to this end. Building addresses and names (if applicable) should be located at entrances, tastefully crafted.

Streets throughout Uptown should be sociable places that offer a sense of security, and residential building projects should make a positive contribution to life on the street.



Classical detailing around entrances is a common feature found in the neighborhood.

A-4 Human Activity

New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

A top priority within the **Heart of Uptown** character area is to promote active, customer-oriented retail storefronts at street level. The ground floor of buildings in this character area should help create the most active and vibrant street environment in Uptown. A variety of narrower storefront shops are preferred to wide continuous single storefronts.

Major retail spaces are encouraged on streets designated **Large Scale Commercial Corridor** as shown on the map. The physical scale of these streets and their buildings is the most appropriate to accommodate major retailers in Uptown without detracting from street activity levels and character.

Throughout Uptown encourage outdoor dining



A variety of narrow storefronts create an active streetscape.



This space provides a transition between indoors and outdoors and helps create an active street environment.

A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street

For residential projects, the space between the building and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

Front Setbacks

Where feasible, new development in the **Uptown Park** character area should consider landscaping any setback from the sidewalk. Landscaping within a setback should provide a transition from public to private space and define a boundary between these. The use of raised planters within the setback should be encouraged in some locations where this would reduce impacts to landscaping from foot traffic and sidewalk litter.

Where the incorporation of decorative gates and fencing may be necessary to delineate between public and private spaces, these features should be softened by landscaping where feasible. Fenced areas should be large enough to provide sufficient space for residents to personalize private entrance (e.g., include potted plants or other personal amenities).



Landscape design in a shallow residential setback from the street.



An entry courtyard in a deeper setback from the street



Porches and stoops, and balconies and windows help animate the street and create a self-policing environment.

A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access

Siting should minimize the impact of automobile parking and driveways on the pedestrian environment, adjacent properties and pedestrian safety.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

Throughout Uptown the preferred location for surface parking lots is in the rear of the building or away from or otherwise screened from the street and sidewalk.

Preferred Alley Access

Access to new development is preferred via alleyways, if feasible.

Throughout Uptown encourage all parking for residential uses to be located below grade.

A-10 Corner Lots

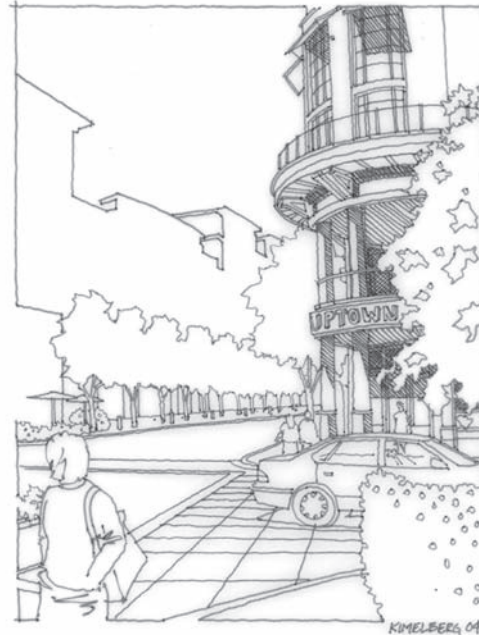
Buildings on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

Corner Lots in Uptown

Generally, buildings within Uptown should meet the corner and not be set back. Building designs and treatments as well as any open space areas should address the corner and promote activity. Corner entrances are strongly encouraged, where feasible.

Corner lots are often desirable locations for small publicly-accessible plazas, turrets, clock towers, art, and other special features. Design corner retail entries to not disrupt access to residential uses above.



Strong corner massing can function as the visual anchor for a block.



rounded



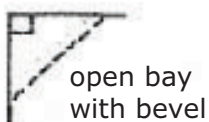
hinged



beveled

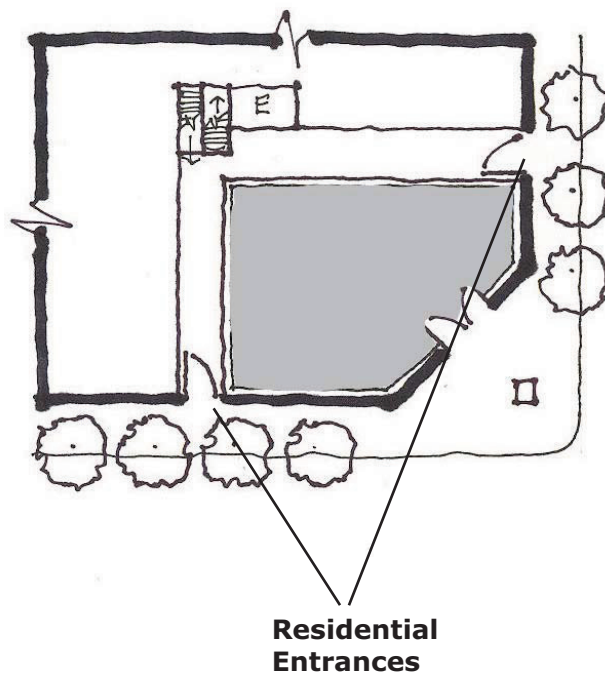


mitred



open bay
with bevel

Corner treatment options.



Retail and residential entrances are carefully placed.

B. Height, Bulk and Scale

B-1 Height Bulk and Scale Compatibility

Projects should be compatible with the scale and development anticipated by the applicable Land Use Policies for the surrounding area and should be sited and designed to provide a sensitive transition to nearby, less intensive zones. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

Throughout Uptown, a departure would be supported for 3' of additional height for projects that step back the top floor of the structure a minimum of 6' from the street. This has the effect of reducing the impact of the structure height on the sidewalk below as well as reducing the length of shadows over the street. Where the Code regulates podium height, the additional 3' applies to the podium.

In the **Heart of Uptown** character area, break facades into smaller massing units. Encourage a horizontal rhythm in the range of 30' to 60', in keeping with a main street scale, particularly at street level.

In the **Uptown Urban** character area larger massing units and less modulation are appropriate, provided they are carefully designed, with quality materials.



In general break down the scale and massing of larger buildings in the Heart of Uptown.



In the Uptown Urban character area, larger-massing units may be appropriate with quality materials and good design.

C. Architectural Elements and Materials

C-1 Architectural Context

New Buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

In the **Uptown Park** character area, extensive landscaping, the use of brick and inlaid tile as building materials and designs with an appearance of substance and quality are recommended to promote Uptown Park's desired character.

The **Uptown Park** character area emphasizes the notion of historic continuity—the relationship of built structures over time. This relationship encourages diversity of styles within a coherent whole, reinforcing the key elements of noteworthy buildings.

The **Uptown Park** and **Heart of Uptown** character districts prefer an architecture that emphasizes human scale and quality, detailing and materials, and that remains compatible with the existing community.

Generally, the following architectural features are encouraged during the design review process:

- Increased architectural detailing;
- Individualized storefronts;
- Substantial window detailing and recessed windows;
- Variations in roofline and additional roofline detailing; honest parapet lines with built-up cornice; and
- References to historic architectural styles found in the area including art deco, and the unique styling of Worlds-Fair-era Seattle.



Uptown Precedent: Design elements and materials that lend a human scale and sense of permanence.



A regular cadence of storefront windows and pilasters along the street-level facade enhances the pedestrian experience.

Features and materials that are discouraged include:

- Peaked parapets or other substantial false roofline facades;
- Large expanses of steel and glass;
- Concrete block on facade;
- Large expanses of walling with little or no detailing;
- Large expanses of stucco walling without detailing and windows;
- Synthetic stucco; and
- Flush window treatments (with little or no detailing).

Supplemental Guidance Scope

The **Uptown Urban** character area embraces high quality urban infill, and responds to special relationships with nearby civic institutions. The following features are encouraged:

- Consistent street wall;
- Engaging the sidewalk / storefront transparency;
- Building siting that responds to Seattle Center entry points;
- Defined cornices;
- High quality, durable materials;
- Distinct residential and commercial components; and
- Throughout Uptown, upper level balconies are discouraged on the street side of residential buildings. Bay windows are a preferred architectural element on the street side. This guideline is intended to avoid open displays of storage, which are sometimes an unintended consequence of street side balconies.

C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency

Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept. Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its facade walls.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

Throughout Uptown buildings and landscaping should strive to create projects with an overall neat and cohesive appearance.

C-3 Human Scale

The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements and details to achieve a good human scale.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

Throughout Uptown human-scaled architecture is strongly preferred. Proportion should be provided by such components as the detail of windows, doorways, and entries. Appropriate scale and proportion may also be influenced by the selection of building materials.

Architectural designs that create an impression of reduced size consistent with a pedestrian-oriented environment should be encouraged, especially in the **Uptown Park** and **Heart of Uptown** character areas.



Window doorways and entrances lend a human scale to the design.



Provide overhead cover along the sidewalk for pedestrian comfort.

The use of exterior canopies or other weather protection features is favored throughout the district for residential and commercial uses. Canopies should blend well with the building and surroundings, and present an inviting less massive appearance.

Throughout Uptown size signs, exterior light fixtures, canopies and awnings to the scale of the building and the pedestrian. Signs that add creativity and individual expression to the design of storefronts are encouraged. Signs should be integrated into the overall design of the building. Signs that appear cluttered and detract from the quality of the building's design are discouraged.



Signs can provide identity and serve to unify a varied streetscape. This portion of the Uptown District's commercial core employs similarly scaled, deco vertical signs.



Pedestrian scale blade sign and drop lighting provide greater detail at the street level of a building to satisfy the pedestrian.

C-4 Exterior Finish Materials

Building materials should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

Within the **Uptown Park** and **Heart of Uptown** character areas, the use of historic-looking brick and tile facades are strongly encouraged to create a more consistent, unified, and historic appearance throughout the district. The use of decorative brick facade is consistent historically within the Uptown area, with a strong concentration just north of the district across W. Mercer St. Facade detailing is strongly encouraged and buildings may incorporate both materials to provide a richer finish.

Throughout Uptown, decorative exterior treatments using brick, tile, and/or other interesting exterior finish materials are strongly preferred. Quality exterior finish materials should be incorporated at all levels and on all exterior walls. Use materials, colors, and details to unify a building's appearance; buildings and structures should be built of compatible materials on all sides.



Decorative brick facades are important historic features in Uptown.



Example of a new building that respects the surrounding character by incorporating high-quality materials such as brick and masonry lintels.

D. Pedestrian Environment

D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances

Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open space should be considered.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

Throughout Uptown entries should be designed to be pedestrian friendly (via position, scale, architectural detailing, and materials) and should be clearly discernible to the pedestrian.

Individual or unit entrances in buildings that are accessed from the sidewalk or other public spaces should consider appropriate designs for defensible space as well as safety features (e.g., decorative fencing and gating). Landscaping should be consistent with these features.

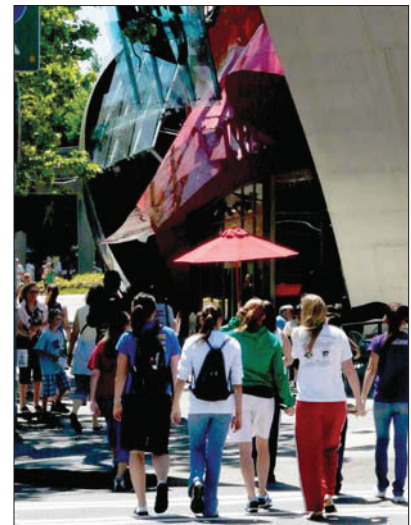
Throughout Uptown special attention to the pedestrian experience and street right-of-way should be given along **pedestrian corridors** as identified on the map (pg. VI).

Throughout Uptown the use of a pedestrian-scaled streetlamp within all character areas is encouraged. In addition, streetscape features such as street clocks and benches are encouraged in **Heart of Uptown** and **Uptown Urban** character areas.

In the **Uptown Urban** and **Heart of Uptown** character areas, encourage Seattle Center campus redevelopment along its boundaries to either open vistas from Uptown into Seattle Center or to provide activation for the street.

Including amenities for transit riders in a building's design rather than the traditional use of curbside bus shelters generates a safer and more active street. In the **Uptown Urban** and **Heart of Uptown** character areas the elimination of curbside bus shelters is encouraged in retail areas as appropriate. These boxy shelters visually obstruct storefronts and provide cover for criminal activity. Building designs are encouraged that integrate canopies to accommodate transit riders and nurture stewardship of transit stops by property owners and businesses.

Supplemental guidance related to Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances is provided under Guideline A2 – Streetscape Compatibility.



Pedestrian corridors into and out of Seattle Center are important.

D-2 Blank Walls

Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks. Where blank walls are unavoidable, they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

Within the **Uptown Park** character area landscaping (e.g., trellised climbing plants and other urban greenery) is the preferred treatment for walls. Larger wall areas should include landscaped treatments at the wall or between the wall and public rights-of-way, but not in a manner that would create unsafe conditions (e.g., create hiding spaces or provide exterior access to higher floors).

In the **Uptown Urban** and **Heart of Uptown** character areas artwork and decorative surfacing may provide an alternative wall treatment to landscaping in some locations. However, painted murals are the least preferred solution to larger wall areas in Uptown.

D-3 Retaining Walls

Retaining walls near a public sidewalk that extend higher than eye level should be avoided where possible. Where high retaining walls are unavoidable, they should be designed to reduce their impact on pedestrian comfort and to increase the visual interest along the streetscape.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

Throughout Uptown retaining walls should be constructed of materials that will provide substantial pattern and texture. Rockery, stone, stacked stone or concrete, or brick are preferred. Poured concrete or other smooth treatments/materials are strongly discouraged, unless treated to provide textural or design interest. Walls should be appropriately designed and scaled for the pedestrian environment. Landscaping in conjunction with retaining walls is strongly encouraged.



A retaining wall constructed with durable materials, and landscape to soften the building edge along a sloping streetscape.

D-4 Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks

Parking lots near sidewalks should provide adequate security and lighting, avoid encroachment of vehicles onto the sidewalk, and minimize the visual clutter of parking lot signs and equipment.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

In the **Uptown Urban** and **Heart of Uptown** character areas, at-grade parking lots near sidewalks are strongly discouraged.

D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures

The visibility of all at-grade parking structures or accessory parking garages should be minimized. The parking portion of a structure should be architecturally compatible with the rest of the structure and streetscape. Open parking spaces and carports should be screened from the street and adjacent properties.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

Throughout Uptown designs that lessen the visibility of parking structures are preferred. Garages and parking structures should, where feasible, incorporate landscaping to reduce their visual impact. Landscaping may include climbing plantings and other landscape means to reduce the impact of larger blank walls. Large, open paved drive-ways and carports are strongly discouraged. Alley access is preferred, if feasible.

Parking structures are discouraged in the **Uptown Urban** and **Heart of Uptown** character areas.

D-8 Treatment of Alleys

Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.

Throughout Uptown ensure alleys are designed to be clean, maintained spaces. Recessed areas for recyclables and disposables should be provided.

In **Heart of Uptown** and **Uptown Urban** character areas encourage alleys to be activated with subordinate retail spaces at the mouth of the alley. Encourage retail to “turn the corner” at alley entrances.

D-9 Commercial Signage

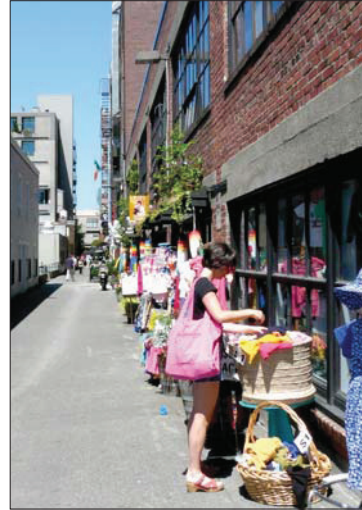
The design of alley entrances should enhance the pedestrian street front.

Throughout Uptown tasteful signs designed for pedestrians (as opposed to passing vehicles) are preferred. Backlit signs, animated reader boards and similar signs are discouraged. Blade signs, wall-mounted signs, signs below awnings, and similar signs are preferred.

D-10 Commercial Lighting

Signs should add interest to the street front environment and should be appropriate for the scale and character desired in the area.

Uptown accommodates shopping and eating experiences during the dark hours of the Northwest’s late fall, winter, and early spring. Pedestrian area lighting is an important feature of each block in the **Uptown Urban** character area, and the **Heart of Uptown** character area.



Alleys can be activated retail spaces.

E. Landscaping

E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

Within the **Uptown Park** character area, streetscape improvements should include a consistent landscaped planting strip between the sidewalk and the street as consistent with the historic pattern in the area. New developments may take guidance from the *Uptown Park District Landscaped Streets Element* as endorsed by the Uptown Alliance, for the format of streetscape improvements.

Throughout Uptown, streetscape landscaping as per guidelines A-2 and D-1 is encouraged.

Example streetscape guidance from the *Uptown Park Landscaped Streets Element*.

E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site

Landscaping, including living plant material, special pavement, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.

Uptown Supplemental Guidance:

Throughout Uptown, but especially within the **Uptown Park** character area, landscaping should be substantial and include a variety of textures and colors, to the extent possible. Landscaping should be used to enhance each site, including buildings, setbacks, entrances, open space areas, and to screen parking and other less visually attractive areas. Encourage planted containers at building entries.



Uptown Precedent: Intimate courtyards enhance the urban setting.



The Uptown Park District has an outstanding tradition of landscape design. Courtyards, terraces and gardens contribute to the area's setting.



A garden at the prominent corner of a new development.

This example shows how integrated landscape contributes to an attractive facade.

